

SNOWPACK

Snow accumulation began a little later than normal in most mountain watersheds. Soil moisture conditions under the snowpack were generally drier than normal except in the northwest and north-central parts of the state where they were above average. The driest soil moisture conditions were found in southwest Montana. January 1 snowpacks were generally below to well below average in areas west of the Divide and near to above average east of the Divide except in extreme southwest Montana where snowpacks were well below average. The Lower Yellowstone tributary basins in northern Wyoming reported well above average snowpacks. By April 1, snowpack conditions had improved in most areas west of the Divide. The Kootenai and Flathead Basins were generally near or slightly below average while the Clark Fork and Bitterroot Basins had slightly below average snowpack. Areas, east of the Divide, reported near to above average snowpack except in the southwestern part of the state where below to well below average conditions persisted on the Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin Drainages. Warm temperatures and below average precipitation during April melted all low elevation snow and caused significant declines in the mid-elevation snowpacks. Snowpacks on May 1 were generally below to well below average throughout much of the state. Only isolated high elevation areas showed near normal conditions. May weather reversed the early snowmelt trend with cooler temperatures and above average precipitation. Good high elevation snow remained on June 1 and generally sustained good streamflows well into the summer.

PRECIPITATION

Mountain precipitation for the October through December period was generally near to well above average over most areas of the state except in the Bitterroot, Jefferson and Madison River Drainages in southwestern Montana where below average amounts were recorded. The wettest areas were found in the northwest, north-central and central parts of Montana and in the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming. January precipitation was generally near to a little below average in the southwestern part of the state and above to well above elsewhere. February precipitation varied from above average in the northwest corner of Montana to well below average in the southern and central areas. All areas of the state generally received less than average amounts during March and April. May began dry and ended very wet with near to above average mountain precipitation reported over all the state. June and July were near to above normal in the northwest and north-central parts and below average elsewhere in the state. August moisture was generally near to above average while September was generally dry over most of the state.

RESERVOIRS

Currently, most irrigation reservoirs in Southwest Montana have well below average storage. Many are reporting less than 50 percent of average storage for the end of September. Reservoirs in the Sun, Teton, Marias, Milk and St. Mary Basins report near to above average carryover storages. Most other reservoirs have near average amounts of stored water for this time of year.

STREAMFLOW

Runoff from spring snowmelt began earlier than normal as a result of above average temperatures in April. Most areas had 1.5 to 2.5 times average April flows. Cool temperatures in May coupled with the above average snowmelt runoff in April resulted in May streamflow volumes being below to well below average over most the state. Delayed snowmelt at the higher elevations helped sustain streamflows through June and July but streamflows generally remained below average through this period. Streamflows for the April-September period were generally near to above average in the northwest and north-central parts of the state, near to below average in the central and south-central areas and below to well below average in the southwestern basins of Montana. The Tongue and Powder Rivers had near to above average runoff.

SOIL MOISTURE

Soil moisture conditions are generally near average in the northwest and north-central areas of the state. Elsewhere, mountain soils are generally drier than normal with the driest areas in Southwest Montana.

